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IDAHO FIELD ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Communication Plan

FINAL

JUNE 1994

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
IDAHO STATE OFFICE

FIELD ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

Communication Plan

BACKGROUND

Ecosystem-based management in Idaho was launched in February 1993 when 15 teams made up of 128 Idaho employees met to tackle the questions of how BLM could better serve the public and improve the quality of natural resources we manage. One theme threaded through many of the teams' reports at the conclusion of the meeting: an ecosystem approach to management looked like a good bet to address both issues.

In subsequent meetings and follow-up reports, ecosystem-based management concepts were shaped and tailored to fit BLM in Idaho. Some of the concepts were put into effect. A new system of budgeting was developed that links budgets to ecosystem-based management objectives and not to specific programs. Also, a field model for a new BLM organization in Idaho was developed, one that assigns interdisciplinary teams to manage "ecosystem management areas," which are based on natural features such as watersheds and terrain.

Idaho has the go-ahead to begin implementing ecosystem-based management under the umbrella of the new field organization strategy. A communication plan is needed to help inform key publics of the changes and strengthen support for the effort.

This plan outlines the outreach effort for BLM's Idaho organization.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Ecosystem-based management is not a clear concept in the minds of the public, and in some ways, even our own employees. Resistance to change represented by the field organization strategy will be encountered from some public segments and within BLM.

Commodity groups are suspicious, fearing the changes will translate to more restrictions on activities such as grazing, mining and timber harvest. They also worry that they've had little or no participation in developing ecosystem-based management in Idaho.

Conservation groups favor the concept, but have had little specific to say in support of BLM's efforts. Part of this is because they have few details about BLM's proposed changes; another reason may be that other issues such as rangeland reform, the Idaho training range proposal and salmon recovery, have absorbed much of their time and attention.

BLM employees are most concerned about what the "new" organization will look like and how it may affect their job and location. They also are divided over how ecosystem management areas should be delineated, how funding will be allocated and other issues.

Elected leaders generally are aware that BLM is adopting an ecosystem-based management approach, but have few details about the effects of the change.

The communication plan will identify the key publics, their requirements, and develop the means and messages to meet their needs. It must also allow some room for many of these groups to feel ownership in the final product.

GOALS OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

The communication plan will help to:

1. Gain or increase understanding, acceptance and support of ecosystem-based management and the field organization in Idaho by key publics.
2. Obtain information and ideas from key constituencies to improve ecosystem-based management efforts.
3. Respond to concerns of employees, key publics and the news media.
4. Control rumors about the effects or changes that ecosystem-based management and the field organization may cause.

ISSUES

This is a sampling of field organization and ecosystem-based management issues, from both employees' and the public's perspectives.

EDUCATION

Interest in ecosystem-based management is high in Idaho, yet is not well-understood by much of the public and some BLM employees. We must increase our educational efforts.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

BLM needs to ensure that the public is informed and involved as the transition to ecosystem-based management and the new field organization in Idaho is made.

LAND USE CHANGES

Some land-use activities may change after ecosystem-based management is adopted, but they are expected to be minor and not disruptive to Idaho communities.

ORGANIZATION

Employees are concerned about changes in responsibilities and job locations that will be part of the new field organization and ecosystem-based management.

NEED FOR ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

BLM has practiced ecosystem-based management to a degree, and for that reason, some members of the public may think the change is not needed. The new approach, however, is a much greater commitment to ecosystem-based management than in the past and represents an improved way for BLM to conduct business.

OPERATIONS

Some employees and members of the public are concerned about several operations or logistical issues. They wonder if current plans, policies, personnel levels and regulations are sufficient to implement ecosystem-based management. Coordination with other agencies, particularly the U.S. Forest Service, is also a must to help ecosystem-based management fulfill its potential. The relationship among ecosystem-based management and other initiatives such as PACFISH and Rangeland Reform must also be defined.

BUDGET

The ecosystem-based budget process is not well-understood.

SIMPLE MESSAGES

In briefings to key groups, BLM must stress the same messages to help ensure consistency and counter misinformation. These basic "simple messages" are listed below.

1. No BLM offices will be closed, although changes within offices will occur.

2. More funding will be directed toward on-the-ground work and less for administration.

3. Ecosystem-based management does not mean that new restrictions will be placed on public land activities.

4. Throughout the implementation process, every effort will be made to accommodate the needs of employees and their families.

5. Ecosystem-based management is not only the best way to manage natural resources, it also accounts for economic and social factors related to public land.

6. Ecosystem-based management will, in the future, help prevent more listings of species as threatened or endangered.

7. Public service will be improved in the new field organization.

8. This is not solely an Idaho program, but will be implemented in similar ways in each BLM state organization.

9. The change in organization complements the goals of the "National Performance Review."

10. Ecosystem-based management is not a mystery; it is definable and understandable.

IMPORTANT GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

1. BLM Employees
   a. District and resource areas
   b. State office
   c. Key W.O. employees
2. Congressional Delegation
3. Conservation Groups
4. Other Federal Agencies
   a. U.S. Forest Service
   b. Bureau of Reclamation
   c. National Park Service
   d. Bureau of Indian Affairs
5. Idaho State Agencies
   a. Department of Fish and Game
   b. Department of Lands
   c. Water Resources
6. Governor Andrus
7. Idaho Cattle Association
8. Idaho Woolgrowers Association
9. Farm Bureau
10. Northwest Mining Association
11. Idaho Mining Association
12. News Media
13. Tribal Governments
14. County Commissions
15. Chambers of Commerce
16. Other key groups and individuals designated by district manager

ACTIVITIES

The communication plan will incorporate new information as it becomes available. It will be updated periodically as new issues emerge.

1. Meetings with BLM employees to announce proposal and answer questions (SD and project team).
   Beginning in June 1994.

2. Publish a newsletter for employees that will address the basic proposal (ISO 912). The newsletter will be published as often as needed to keep employees informed as the transition to a new organization and ecosystem-based management takes place.
   First edition to employees by mid-June 1994. Topic will also be addressed in state director's column in "Idaho Inside BLM."

3. Designate a core group to be contacts to answer employee questions about ecosystem-based management (Under direction of SD).
   Designated by June 1994.

4. Brief appropriate contacts: congressional delegations, governor, interest groups (SD, ISO 912, project team members). ISO 912 will prepare visual aids and talking points to assist with briefings. Some constituents may have to be briefed by letter.
   Briefings will begin in June 1994.

5. Districts brief key constituencies such as congressional offices outside of Boise, local agencies, county commissions, etc. District managers will take the lead, assisted by appropriate personnel.
   Briefings will begin June 13, 1994.

6. News release (ISO 912), with follow up visits to editorial boards, if appropriate (DMs, members of support team). For television use, a video news release will be developed by ISO 912.
   News release and video news release will be ready by mid-June, sent out at discretion of SD.

7. ISO 912 will develop a set of overheads and a briefing packet for use by all briefing teams to help ensure consistency of message.
   Packet and overheads were prepared in March and updated for June 13 release.

8. Periodic evaluations of outreach effort by SD, DSD/External Affairs and district representatives to determine if public affairs activities are effective.
   August and November of 1994 and February 1995.

9. Districts will send a list of organizations and individuals who have been briefed to ISO 912.
   List will be sent by June 15, 1994.

SUMMARY

In Idaho, the change to a new field organization and ecosystem-based management will be viewed skeptically by some people, both inside and outside the organization. It's important that BLM be willing to talk, listen and adjust ecosystem-based management in Idaho to help ensure a successful transition.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN IDAHO

IDAHO FIELD ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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IDAHO

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SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN IDAHO

THE ROOTS OF CHANGE

In February of 1993, 15 teams comprised of 128 BLM employees met to tackle the questions of how BLM could better serve the public and improve the quality of natural resources we manage. Many of the teams reported that an ecosystem-based approach to management looked like the best way to address both issues.

SHAPING THE FUTURE
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A NEW LOOK ORGANIZATION

To improve the efficiency of our natural resource management and accommodate the ecosystem-based approach, a new organization within Idaho is being instituted.

Among the new field organization's features are:

- An emphasis on managing resources on an interdisciplinary basis by ecosystem teams, rather than by individual resource disciplines competing against one another.
- More resources, in terms of personnel and funding, will be directed to field offices.
- A reduction of administrative overhead, particularly at the state office level.
- Eventual designation of ecoregions within the state, determined by watershed and other geophysical attributes.
- More focus on comprehensive management of Idaho's four river basins — the Upper Snake, Lower Snake, Salmon/Clearwater and Upper Columbia.
- A new system of budgeting, linked directly to areas needing special attention, called "ecosystem management areas" in Idaho.

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- More consideration of economic and social values in BLM decisions.
- Better measurement of improved performance, based on ecosystem-related objectives and monitoring activities to measure improvements.

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WHAT IT DOESN'T MEAN

- Elimination of offices. BLM will continue to have a presence in towns where offices are currently located. Responsibilities within offices may change, but no BLM offices will be closed.

- New restrictions on land-use activities. Many people assume that ecosystem-based management automatically means cutbacks in grazing, recreation, logging and other land uses. Changes will occur in places, but widescale restrictions will not take place.

- Mass upheaval within BLM. Changes in responsibilities, and in some cases, job location, will take place. But throughout the implementation process, every effort will be made to accommodate the needs of employees.

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THE IDAHO MODEL

New field organization strategies are being developed in all other BLM states. Idaho was the first to begin the process and is serving as a model for other BLM offices as they put together their plans.

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SCHEDULE

- March 15 — May 9, 1994
  State Office and Field Office teams finalized roles and functions

- May 10, 1994
  Idaho Management Team review and approval

- May 24, 1994
  Final approvals obtained from Washington Office

- August 1, 1994
  New State Office organization initiated

- August 1, 1994
  New Field Ecosystem-Based Management organization initiated

- September 30, 1996
  Idaho implementation complete

SHAPING THE FUTURE
OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN IDAHO

SUMMARY

Ecosystem-based management and the accompanying new field organization of BLM in Idaho represents the best means of managing people and public land resources for the 1990s and beyond.

QUESTIONS?

Call Del Vail, Idaho State Director, (208)-384-3001.